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WESTFIELD NINTH GRADE CENTER

Architectural metal entry welcomes ninth graders to their high school transition

Ninth grade can be a challenge for students in districts with middle school or K-8 class groupings. The move up to a high school building comes with greater academic demands and new routines of rotating through classes and adjusting to a new social environment. Educational researchers have found many students experience achievement and grade declines during this transition. In light of these challenges, a growing number of districts are opening dedicated centers for ninth graders, either as separate floors or wings within a high school or in their own buildings.

The new Westfield Ninth Grade Center in Houston is an example of the advantages such facilities can offer students at this tricky age. It's design, including a striking entryway incorporating a unique use of metal wall panels, helps students recognize right away that the Spring Independent School District sees them as something special.

Located next to Spring ISD's Westfield High School, the Ninth Grade Center was formerly home to a middle school, but the facility has been extensively remodeled – and it's also one of three dedicated ninth grade schools the district has opened in the past several years. Amenities include a dance studio, media center and fitness center. Separately housing the 620 freshmen also is relieving pressure on the high school next door, which now is home to 2,800 students across 10th-12th grades.

Designers with the architecture team included DLR Group and Pfluger, which made creative use of metal wall panels in two profiles and finishes to create the standout entrance. The plan uses ribbed, perforated

panels in a Charcoal PAC-CLAD finish to create a shade canopy above the main doorway (and also to shade the second-floor curtainwall). It also layers the panels over portions of the first floor's curtainwall, for both shading and to create a neutral backdrop for the school's signage. The sign's bright red finish is carried to corrugated panels at the building's base and roofline. The project also incorporates Charcoal corrugated PAC-CLAD panels elsewhere along the exterior.

All told, 24,000 sq. ft. of the Petersen's 7.2 panels with perforations were specified, along with 3,500 sq. of Corrugated panels in Charcoal finish and 8,000 sq. ft. of the same profile in custom Scarlett. All were fabricated from .040-gauge aluminum. PRC Roofing Co. of Houston performed the installation.

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Petersen, a Carlisle company, manufactures PAC-CLAD architectural metal cladding systems in multiple gauges of steel and aluminum. PAC-CLAD products include hidden- and exposed-fastener wall panels, standing seam roof panels, flush- and reveal-joint wall panels, vented or solid soffit panels, perforated metal, coil and flat sheet, composite panels, column covers, plus fascia and coping. All are available in a Kynar-based 70% PVDF Fluropon coating in 46 standard colors and 16 wood grain finishes that include a 30-year finish warranty. Most colors meet LEED requirements and are rated by the Cool Roof Rating Council. Custom colors and weathertightness warranties are offered. BIM and CAD documents are available for most products. Founded in 1965, Petersen's facilities are located in Illinois, Georgia, Texas, Maryland, Arizona and Washington. For information on the complete line of Petersen's PAC-CLAD metal products call 800-PAC-CLAD, visit pac-clad.com or write to info@pac-clad.com.

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Editorial contact:
Rob Heselbarth
847-981-4707
rheselbarth@petersenmail.com